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BOSTON GLOBE
20 APRIL 1982

Ghotbzadeh confesses to plot to kill Khomeini

Agence France Presse

TEHRAN, Iran — Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, former foreign minister, confessed yesterday to having plotted to kill Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran's Islamic revolutionary leader, and implicated a leading Shiite clergyman in the plot.

In a 15-minute statement on Iranian television, Ghotbzadeh, who was arrested last week on charges of plotting to overthrow Khomeini, said:

"Two ranking officers proposed blowing up a house near the residence of the Imam [Khomeini] and bombing his residence when he was receiving the principal leaders of the republic."

"Two intermediaries, Hojatoleslams Haj Mehdi Madavi and Abdul Reza Hajavi, told me that Ayatollah [Kazem] Shariat-Madari had told them he could contribute nothing toward carrying out the plan but that, if it succeeded, he would make statements in its support," Ghotbzadeh said, who faces the death penalty on the plot charges.

Shariat-Madari, the spiritual leader of the northwest Iranian city of Tabriz, is a moderate member of Iran's Islamic clergy who has objected to aspects of the Moslem extremist regime instituted by Khomeini.

Ghotbzadeh said he "was seeking to overthrow the government and not to change the regime of the Islamic republic."

"I had accepted from the start the proposal to kill the Imam Khomeini," he said, "but then I reconsidered. I wanted him to be saved, but I did not know how to go about it."

Ghotbzadeh said that the plotters were armed for the attack but had sent a list of weapons they lacked to "Hector Villalon, who was unable to provide them because he had not received funds."

Villalon was named earlier yesterday by Hojatoleslam Reyshahri as a "French national" involved in the plot. He said that Villalon had not only supplied the plotters with money and weapons but

also acted as a link between the plotters and the CIA.

(In Paris yesterday, Villalon described the assertions that he was involved in the alleged plot as "raving madness.")

Ghotbzadeh, who served as Iran's foreign minister from December 1979 to September 1980, said, "In my present situation, I voluntarily accept the punishment that awaits me."

The president of the military revolutionary court said that a public trial would be held for 45 alleged plotters, three of whom were Iranian army colonels.